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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 003515

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SUBJECT: SADRIST MPS LEAD TIRADE AGAINST MNF-I: SPEAKING TO
THE IRAQI STREET

Classified By: Political Counselor Margaret Scobey for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d).

¶1. (U) A Sadrism-led tirade against MNF-I dominated the
September 19 session of the Council of Representatives (CoR).

Quickly diverting from the legislative agenda, CoR Speaker
Mahmoud Mashadani read a short press release from his office
in which he "strongly denounced a raid by U.S. forces on the
residence of Representative Zainab al-Jibouri." (Note:
Jibouri is a Sadrism MP from Sadr City. Additionally, a raid
was not conducted on her home; but a routine Iraqi Police
Patrol in the city, with US Police Training Team, did enter
the site and conduct a search since they found illegal
armament outside her home in a vehicle. End note.)
Mashadani then permitted Sadrism bloc leader Falah Hassen
Shenshel to read his own statement from the podium. In his
statement, which lasted about 10 minutes (Note: statements
are normally limited to five minutes), Shenshel accused
Coalition/American Forces of violating Iraqi sovereignty and
targeting Sadrists of late because of the movement's calls
for a return of "sovereignty" to Iraq. "The Americans are
no different than Saddam if they can detain a mother and
child in broad daylight," he ranted, referring to an alleged
incident in the al-Jihad neighborhood of Baghdad.

¶2. (U) In the ensuing discussion, which lasted almost
another hour, other members weighed in with a mixture of
impassioned condemnation of alleged MNF-I violations and
calls to regulate the coalition forces. After the Speaker
finally ended the discussion to move forward on the agenda,
which included second readings of four laws, the Sadrism MPs
walked off the floor. The CoR finished the second reading of
one law before adjourning for the day.

¶3. (C) Comment: The Sadrists, as CoR Deputy Speaker Aref
Tayfour put it to PolCouns later in the afternoon, are
speaking their familiar rhetoric to the Iraqi street. (Note:
The session was broadcast live on local Iraqi television.)
They also may be maneuvering in anticipation of a crackdown
by MNF-I and Iraqi forces on Sadrism-affiliated militias in
Baghdad and/or previewing their campaign platform for
provincial elections. End comment.
SPECKHARD